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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
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10/685,247

10/14/2003

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SMI0077.US

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07/02/2008

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EXAMINER

CASTELLANO, STEPHEN J

ART UNIT

PAPER NUMBER

3781

MAIL DATE

DELIVERY MODE

07/02/2008

PAPER

**Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.**

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.



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Claims 2 and 10-17 have been canceled. Claims 1, 3-9 and 18-33 are pending.

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

Claims 1, 3, 18-21, 23-26, 29 and 30 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Saltz in view of Liu.

Saltz discloses a sterilization case assembly comprising a plurality of cases (box units 12), second case (any unit 12 stacked directly above a first case 12) stacked upon a first case (any case 12 stacked directly below a second case) in vertical direction, the front side of the assembly is toward the right of the Fig. 1 and 2, the second case is offset from the first case in the Fig. 1 view, each of the cases are movable between closed and open positions (by door 28). Saltz discloses the general box shape and each case having top and bottom walls, the bottom wall of a second case directly contacting the top wall of a first case. The bottom wall of a second case being offset from the top wall of a first case upon which the second case is stacked upon in frontward to rearward direction with the cases in a closed position is accomplished by a sliding connection of rails 52 and 54.

Saltz discloses the invention except for the drawers. Liu teaches a similar stackable case assembly with drawers. It would have been obvious to modify each of the cases (box units 12) of Saltz to have their rear walls defined by removable covers to be replaced with drawers as the access to the drawer from the top is easier and usually better lighted than the side access of the removable cover.

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Re claim 3, a case could be defined by a plurality of box units, then one case having a plurality of box units 12 includes a plurality of drawers.

Re claims 21 and 23, Saltz discloses the top and bottom registration elements. However, Saltz doesn't disclose registration elements of partially spherical configuration. Registration elements are provided in many different shapes. Official notice is taken that partially spherically shaped registration elements are well known in the stacking art. It would have been obvious to modify the shape of the registration elements as a matter of design choice in choosing a registration element that doesn't require sliding in one direction, is less pronounced and that is more aesthetically pleasing in appearance than a linear sliding rail configuration.

Re claims 25, 26, 29 and 30, the forward direction of the case or unit is located at the door 28 side. Therefore, the stack of cases is able to offset a center of gravity forward shift of the stair stepped stack to prevent tipping when one or more drawers are slid open.

Claims 4 and 5 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Saltz in view of Liu as applied to claims 3 and 1 above, and further in view of Holsinger.

The combination of Saltz and Liu discloses the invention except for the hinged front cover of claim 4 and the hinged lid of claim 5. Holsinger teaches a hinged front cover and a hinged lid. It would have been obvious to add the front cover and lid to add additional closing to the drawer structure and cases to add to the security of closure as drawers may inadvertently open and spill their contents.

Claim 6 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Saltz in view of Liu and Holsinger as applied to claim 5 above, and further in view of Hunnell et al (Hunnell).

The Saltz-Liu-Holsinger combination discloses the invention except for the lid being removable. Hunnell teaches a removable lid. It would have been obvious to modify the hinged lid to be removable to replace the lid in case of breakage or damage without the need to replace the entire container.

Claim 7 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Saltz in view of Liu and Holsinger as applied to claim 5 above, and further in view of Trower.

The combination discloses the invention except for the handle and recessed pocket. Trower teaches a handle and recessed pocket interlocking means. It would have been obvious to add the handle and recessed pocket of Trower to provide secure fastening in the stacked position to prevent stacked articles from separating.

Claims 8, 9, 22, 27 and 28 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Saltz in view of Liu and Trower.

Saltz discloses the invention except for the drawers, handle and recessed pocket. Liu teaches the drawers and is combined with Saltz as previously discussed for the rejection combining Saltz and Liu. Trower teaches a handle and recessed pocket interlocking means. It would have been obvious to add the handle and recessed pocket of Trower to provide secure fastening in the stacked position to prevent stacked articles from separating.

Claims 31 and 33 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Saltz in view of Liu as applied to claims 1 and 18 above, and further in view of Riley (5540901).

The combination discloses the invention except for the perforated walls. Riley teaches perforated walls for both the outer case and an internal drawer or tray. It would have been obvious to modify the walls of the outer case and inner drawer to be perforated in order to allow

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the passage of sterilizing fluid therein so that items contained within the units can be properly sterilized.

Claim 32 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Saltz in view of Liu and Trower as applied to claim 8 above, and further in view of Riley (5540901).

The combination discloses the invention except for the perforated walls. Riley teaches perforated walls for both the outer case and an internal drawer or tray. It would have been obvious to modify the walls of the outer case and inner drawer to be perforated in order to allow the passage of sterilizing fluid therein so that items contained within the units can be properly sterilized.

Applicant's arguments with respect to claims 1, 3-9 and 18-33 have been considered but are moot in view of the new ground(s) of rejection.

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a).

Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

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Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Stephen J. Castellano whose telephone number is 571-272-4535. The examiner can normally be reached on increased flexibility plan (IFP).

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free). If you would like assistance from a USPTO Customer Service Representative or access to the automated information system, call 800-786-9199 (IN USA OR CANADA) or 571-272-1000.

/Stephen J. Castellano/  
Primary Examiner  
Art Unit 3727

sjc